

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 21, 2018

The Honorable Peter O'Rourke
Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Acting Secretary O'Rourke,

I write to you regarding my concern with respect to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) most recent release of the annual veteran nursing home ratings. In light of the shadow that continues to be cast on the Phoenix VA Medical Center following its most recent inspection, I find it troubling to learn of lapses in care that extend to other areas of the VA's Arizona portfolio.

The VA release indicates that the Northern and Southern Arizona Health Care System received one star for its survey results, and one and two stars respectively for its quality. These results, along with their abysmal overall rankings, are disappointing and unacceptable. This is not the quality of care that we as a nation should provide our aging veteran population. I fear that if the issues highlighted by these rankings are not adequately addressed in a timely manner, we open the door to a chronic lack of medical care for those who need it most.

In order to better understand the challenges faced by the Arizona veteran nursing homes and the VA's path towards improvement of the quality of care, I request answers to the following questions.

- How was the data utilized for the "Survey Star Rating" compiled and what specific questions were asked of the survey population? Please provide detailed survey results for the Northern and Southern Arizona Health Care System.
- What metrics were utilized in order to determine the "Quality Star Rating?" Please provide a detailed listing of the quality data for the Northern and Southern Arizona Health Care System.
- What is the VA's plan to address the complaints and concerns obtained through the nursing home patient survey? What is the timeline to address specific complaints? What changes are necessary to local nursing home processes in order to improve overall delivery of care to the veteran population?
- What is the VA's plan and timeline to address the quality concerns identified through the rating process?
- Why were the detailed quality statistics that the VA tracks on its nursing homes not released publicly until recently? Did this delay prevent veterans and their families from seeking out other available quality health care services?

Our men and women who bravely served and sacrificed in uniform deserve the best quality of care. Four years ago, our nation and the VA let Arizona veterans down, and we must ensure that such appalling and tragic events never occur again. We must work together to guarantee our aging veteran population is properly cared for and not forgotten.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John McCain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "McCain".

John McCain
United States Senator